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Summary record of the 38th meeting
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Chair: Mr. Tommo Monthe ..... (Cameroon)
Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Ruiz Massieu

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 149: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (*continued*)

United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy
(A/72/648, A/72/783 and A/72/789/Add.10)

1. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the Secretary-General's reports on the budget performance of the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) at Brindisi, Italy, for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/648) and on the budget for UNLB for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/783), said that the proposed 2018/19 budget amounted to $87.3 million, an increase of 7.8 per cent compared with 2017/18, attributable mainly to the appreciation of the euro against the United States dollar, and the impact of that change in terms of estimated national staff costs and the higher post-adjustment factor for international staff. In 2018/19, UNLB would continue to provide peacekeeping missions with supply-chain, logistics and information and communications technology services. The Secretary-General was proposing a restructuring of the existing Service for Geospatial Information and Telecommunications Technologies, which would be renamed the Field Technology Service. The proposed 2018/19 budget included a revised concept of operations for strategic deployment stocks, in accordance with the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) (see A/71/798) and of the Advisory Committee (see A/71/836/Add.10), which the General Assembly had endorsed. The outcome of the review of the concept of operations for strategic deployment stocks appeared in Annex III to the report on the budget for UNLB for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/783).

2. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/789/Add.10), said that the Advisory Committee recommended an overall reduction of approximately $1.8 million in the proposed budget for 2018/19. It was recommending against the reassignment and reclassification of a P-4 contracts management officer to the P-5 level; recommending against the conversion to posts of 30 General Service temporary positions; and proposing further reductions covering five operational categories: official travel; facilities and infrastructure; ground transportation; communications and information technology; and other supplies, services and equipment. The Advisory Committee wished to reiterate its recommendation that UNLB should adjust its vehicle holdings to ensure compliance with standard vehicle ratios.

3. Recommending that the General Assembly should defer action on the revised concept of operations for strategic deployment stocks, the Advisory Committee took the view that the Secretary-General should have presented more detailed information to enable it to make comments and recommendations on the subject for consideration by the General Assembly.

4. **Mr. Ismail** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group continued to believe in the need to improve the functioning of UNLB, and had taken note of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors regarding redeployment of resources; strategic flight coordination services; procurement and contract provisions; the Galileo decommissioning project, and environmental matters. It would seek further information from the Secretariat regarding the follow-up to those recommendations, and would examine carefully the proposal to restructure and rename the Service for Geospatial Information and Telecommunications Technologies, and the implications of it being located in Brindisi and Valencia. Echoing the recommendation of the Advisory Committee, the Group called for transparency with respect to the functions, financial resources, and distribution of staff between the two locations. Recalling that the General Assembly, in its resolutions 69/307 and 70/286, had requested the Secretary-General to develop a scalability model for UNLB, the Group expressed regret that the model remained confined to the Field Technology Service, and called on the Secretary-General to provide further details of the model's resource implications.

5. The Group concurred with the view of the Advisory Committee that the Secretary-General should have presented more detailed information, as well as a thorough analysis, of the proposed revised concept of operations for strategic deployment stocks. It recalled the recommendation of OIOS that alternative locations for the holding of such stocks should be considered, and would like to learn how the issue of obsolete strategic deployment stocks had been addressed in the proposal and what obstacles to holding the stocks in a location close to peacekeeping missions were foreseen by the Secretariat.

6. While aware of the complementarity between the roles of UNLB in Brindisi and the Regional Service Centre in Entebbe in supporting peacekeeping missions, the Group perceived a lack of clarity in the roles of the Strategic Air Operations Centre at Brindisi and Transport and Movements Integrated Control Centre at Entebbe. It therefore wished to echo the

recommendations of the Advisory Committee regarding a review of the coordination between the Brindisi and Entebbe centres and the transfer of some functions from Brindisi to Entebbe, and would follow the issue closely in the Committee's informal consultations.

Agenda item 160: Financing of the United Nations peacekeeping forces in the Middle East

(a) United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (A/72/633, A/72/633/Corr.1, A/72/719 and A/72/789/Add.2)

(b) United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (A/72/630, A/72/776 and A/72/789/Add.5)

7. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/633 and A/72/633/Corr.1) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/719) for the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), said that the proposed 2018/19 budget amounted to $61.8 million, an increase of 7.3 per cent over the approved 2017/18 budget, attributable mainly to increased deployment of troops and armoured personnel carriers as part of the phased return of the Force to the Bravo side. In 2018/19, the Force would increase the deployment of military personnel to the Bravo side and prepare for the reoccupation, if conditions permitted, of select vacated observation posts and positions, which would be required to provide logistical support and facilitate access to medical evacuation routes. Additional resources had been proposed, to provide one environmental officer (to ensure environmentally friendly operation with regard to energy, water and waste management) and two engineers (to assist with the maintenance and refurbishment of the facilities on the Bravo side).

8. Introducing the budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 (A/72/630) and the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 (A/72/776) for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), she said that the proposed 2018/19 budget amounted to $482.8 million, a decrease of $160,400 over the approved 2017/18 budget. The proposed budget reflected the recommendations of the strategic review of UNIFIL, conducted in 2017 in accordance with Security Council resolution 2305 (2016). The strategic review's findings and recommendations, including the reconfiguration of the Maritime Task Force, had been presented in the letter of 8 March 2017 addressed by the Secretary-General to the President of the Security Council (S/2017/202).

9. The activities of UNIFIL would continue to focus on restoring peace and security in southern Lebanon, and on maintaining liaison and coordination activities, in particular through the tripartite mechanism, to advance the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). In addition, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2373 (2017), UNIFIL would enhance the visibility of its presence within its existing mandate and capabilities, and enhance reporting on operational matters.

10. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the budget performance from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 for UNDOF (A/72/789/Add.2), said that the Advisory Committee was recommending approval of the proposed 2018/19 budget, subject to an adjustment of just over $50,000, reflecting the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations regarding vacancy rates and lower operational costs deriving from a reduced provision for vehicle rental. Introducing the Advisory Committee's report on the budget performance from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2017 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019 for UNIFIL (A/72/789/Add.5), said that the Advisory Committee was recommending approval of the proposed 2018/19 budget, subject to a reduction of $1.9 million, reflecting the Advisory Committee's observations and recommendations regarding vacancy rates applied to international staff and National Professional Officers, reassignment and redeployment of staff, reductions in operational costs relating to facilities and infrastructure; other supplies, services and equipment; and official travel.

11. **Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation wished to reiterate, as it did every year, that it welcomed the deployment of UNDOF, having offered the Force every support since its inception. The Syrian Arab Republic continued to respect the Disengagement of Forces Agreement as a temporary measure, pending the implementation of the relevant international resolutions stipulating the withdrawal of Israel, the occupying Power, from the entire area of the occupied Syrian Golan, to the 4 June 1967 line. While the role of UNDOF was important, its presence must not be regarded as an alternative to addressing the primary causes of the conflict, namely, putting an end to the occupation in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly. His delegation wished to reiterate that the funding of UNDOF must be the responsibility of the Israeli side, as

the occupying Power, in accordance with the principles of General Assembly resolution 1874 (S-IV).

12. The Secretary-General's reports must remain neutral and unpoliticized when describing the situation in the area of separation, reflecting reality on the ground without favouring one side at the expense of the other. However, the 2016/17 budget performance report (A/72/633 and A/72/633/Corr.1) and the proposed 2018/19 budget (A/72/719) had completely ignored the reason for the deterioration in the security situation on the Bravo side, namely terrorist operations carried out by armed groups related to Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaida, such as the Nusrah Front. It was unfortunate that the authors of the reports insisted on terming those groups "non-State armed groups", thereby disregarding the fact that the Security Council had designated them as terrorist groups. Israel provided them with indirect support, as confirmed in the report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on UNDOF, and with direct support, by attacking Syrian sovereignty every time the Syrian Arab army, in cooperation with its friends, achieved victories against those groups. Such support ultimately led to a continued escalation and continued tension in the area of separation, jeopardizing the lives of UNDOF staff and hampering UNDOF in the fulfilment of its mandate.

13. His delegation welcomed the return of UNDOF to some of the positions that it had previously vacated. His Government had fully supported the Force's redeployment in the area of separation, an important step in maintaining stability in that area, and reiterated its call for the Force's full return to all its former positions. UNDOF must abide by its mandate, which was different from that of other United Nations operations in the area. In the light of that fact, reports relating to the Force must avoid any reference to those other operations. His delegation reiterated the need to comply with the Disengagement of Forces Agreement as well as the agreement on basic operational procedures governing the Force's work in regional cooperation, management practices for recruitment, the establishment of posts and the definition of post functions In that connection, his delegation would make known during the informal consultations its concerns relating to some of the posts proposed by the Secretary-General. It stressed the need to avoid any overlap between the work and mandate of UNDOF, which was of a of military nature, and the work of other United Nations operations in the region that had a political or humanitarian character. The situation must not be exploited to expand cooperation among United Nations operations in other sensitive areas, especially in light of the volatile conditions in the region; his delegation would consider any departure from the mandate of UNDOF as interference in the internal affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic and a violation of the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic remained committed to the Disengagement of Forces Agreement and appreciated the role played by UNDOF in the area of separation. It looked forward to the achievement of a full and just peace in the region, in accordance with the relevant international re olutions. It urged members of the Fifth Committee to approve in full the resources requested for UNDOF.

14. **Mr. Wax** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had not originally intended to take the floor, but could not allow the baseless claims and allegations made against Israel by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to go unchallenged. Once again, an attempt was being made to politicize the discussions of the Fifth Committee. The words of the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic displayed shocking audacity in the light of his country's record of attacking its own people using unconventional and chemical weapons. It was unfortunate that that representative was not confining his comments to the issues of substance before the Committee; he might wish to consider contributing, as Israel did, to advancing the Fifth Committee's work on the wide range of issues covered at its sessions, rather than raising an unchanging list of political points.

15. **Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he would not ordinarily have taken the floor again, but felt compelled to do so by the reaction of the representative of Israel to a statement on UNDOF that was similar in form and content to the statement on UNDOF made in previous years, and that focused on examining the reports of the Secretary-General. It was the representative of Israel who was showing audacity in attempting to divert attention away from Israel's frequent crimes. As the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, he had not been adopting a position, but rather providing a reflection of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and United Nations documents which condemned Israel's actions. The current meeting was neither the time nor the place to enumerate them, and they were no secret. Israel's support for terrorist groups was also no secret, as that country's representative would see if he attended meetings of the Security Council devoted to UNDOF and if he examined reports of the Secretary-General devoted to UNDOF and referring clearly to ISIL and the Nusrah Front. The document reference numbers could easily be provided.

If the representative of Israel was unhappy with the content of those reports, that was a matter for him.

16. **Mr. Wax** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, while maintaining that the current meeting was not the appropriate time or place to raise certain concerns, had just repeated the allegations made in his original statement.

17. **Mr. Awad** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that he had no intention of politicizing a meeting of the Fifth Committee. His words had simply been a reflection of resolutions of the General Assembly and Security Council, and he urged the members of the Committee to review those resolutions, in order to refresh their memories on the matter of the crimes being perpetrated by Israel.

Agenda item 136: Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019 (*continued*)

Estimates in respect of special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council (*continued*)

United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (A/72/7/Add.48 and A/72/371/Add.10)

18. **Ms. Bartsiotas** (Controller), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the revised proposed resource requirements for 2018 for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) (A/72/371/Add.10), said that the General Assembly, in paragraph 41 of its resolution 72/262, had taken note of paragraph 17 of the report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.15) and had decided to authorize the Secretary-General to enter into commitments in an amount not exceeding $50 million for the period from 1 January to 30 June 2018. The revised resources requirements amounted to $114.2 million net, representing a net decrease of $3.3 million compared to the approved resources for 2017. The reduction primarily reflected lower operational cost requirements because of proposed decreases under air transportation and facilities and infrastructure headings.

19. Recalling that the previous UNAMI budget proposal for 2018 (see A/72/371/Add.5) had been submitted for the consideration of the General Assembly in the autumn of 2017, she said that, while that proposal had indicated resource requirements of $111.0 million, and had reflected the same lower operational cost requirements contained in the present report, there had been an increase in requirements in the meantime of $3.2 million, attributable mainly to revised assumptions for civilian personnel costs, including salaries, and for common staff costs and danger pay for international staff.

20. **Mr. Ruiz Massieu** (Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions), introducing the related report of the Advisory Committee (A/72/7/Add.48), said that the Advisory Committee was recommending approval of the budget proposal, subject to minor reductions in staff costs, as it did not regard the reclassification of two positions from the P-4 level to the P-5 level to be sufficiently justified. The Advisory Committee was also recommending that the projected vacancy rates should be made to reflect actual rates, and that reductions should be made to the operational cost requirements for consultants and communications.

21. **Mr. Bahr Aluloom** (Iraq) said that his Government had made efforts to enhance stability and security, and to implement political, economic and social reform; to advance national and social reconciliation; and to achieve balanced relations with the other countries of the region, the world and the international community as a whole. Meanwhile, UNAMI had continued to provide assistance to Iraq in accordance with the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 2367 (2017). After having reclaimed its territory from ISIL, his Government looked forward to receiving more support from the Mission, which should play a variety of critical roles in the implementation of the United Nations response to help his Government and Iraqi society maintain peace and respond to citizens' needs, and should back the United Nations recovery and resilience programme. The latter aimed to strengthen vulnerable communities that had faced terrorism and extremism, and to enhance social harmony after Iraq, with the help of the international community, had met the great challenge of defeating ISIL.

22. The Government of Iraq strove to facilitate the work of UNAMI, and would lend full support to ensure that the Mission fulfilled its duties to Iraq, within the mandate conferred by the Security Council, in a stable security environment allowing it to reach the populations affected. The Government was committed to inclusive national dialogue, social cohesion and unity in Iraq. The best evidence of that commitment was that the Government had marshalled sufficient political will and consensus among Iraqi politicians for the adoption of the legal, organizational and institutional framework needed for the conduct of the elections held on 12 May 2018 and the maintenance of a security climate that allowed the elections to be held in a credible manner

throughout the territory of the country and with the participation of all Iraqis. In order to achieve the desired goals, UNAMI must be furnished with the necessary financial support, and its human resources must be managed effectively in line with those tasks. The financial resources allocated to activities related to the implementation of the Mission's mandate should be increased. The resource requirements of $114,195,400 for 1 January to 31 December 2018 proposed in the report of the Secretary-General reflected a net reduction of $3,349,800, or 2.8 per cent, compared with the resources approved for 2017. That risked undermining the Mission's ability to implement priority areas of its mandate and was not in line with the needs of the Iraqi people in the post-ISIL period, or with humanitarian needs in the reconstruction phase. The Government of Iraq welcomed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee in its report on the Mission at the seventy-first session (A/71/595/Add.5) that the Secretary-General should strengthen the Mission's national staffing complement by converting international staff positions to national staff positions.

23. While he wished to thank the Organization for reporting on UNAMI, he emphasized that the Secretary-General's reports should focus exclusively on financial and administrative matters, and should be free of political undertones that had no place in the deliberations of the Fifth Committee. His Government was grateful for the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his team in Baghdad and New York to help the Government and people of Iraq, and looked forward to the Mission's work being covered by a clear mechanism for coordination with the United Nations country team and the Government of Iraq, in order to provide relief and humanitarian aid to Iraqis and build communities, particularly in the recovery period.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.